

REMARKS

Reconsideration of the above-identified patent application in view of the present amendment and the following remarks is respectfully requested.

This amendment amends the specification to add headings. This amendment cancels claims 1-16 and adds new claims 17-28. It is respectfully submitted that new claims 17-28 overcome the 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph rejection.

New claim 17 recites a ball-and-socket joint comprising a joint housing having first and second axial ends and a ball head with a ball stud extending from the ball head. The ball head is received in the joint housing and the ball stud extends outward of the first axial end of the joint housing. A gap is formed between the ball head and the joint housing adjacent the ball stud at the first axial end of the joint housing. A bearing shell is received in the joint housing for supporting the ball head for tilting relative to the joint housing. The ball-and-socket joint also includes a housing cover for closing the second axial end of the joint housing and structure interposed between the housing cover and at least a portion of the bearing shell. The structure acts upon the portion of the bearing shell to urge the portion of the bearing shell toward the first axial end of the joint housing and, in response to wear of the portion of the bearing shell, to wedge the portion of the bearing shell into the gap.

It is respectfully submitted that claim 17 patentably defines over Flumerfelt, U.S. Patent No. 2,181,300, Morin,

U.S. Patent No. 4,318,627, Dresselhouse, U.S. Patent No. 5,154,530, and Herbenar, U.S. Patent No. 3,945,737, whether taken singularly or in combination. None of the references teach or suggest structure that acts upon a portion of a bearing shell to urge the portion of the bearing shell toward the first axial end of the joint housing (i.e., the end through which the ball stud passes) and, in response to wear of the portion of the bearing shell, to wedge the portion of the bearing shell into a gap that is formed between the ball head and the joint housing adjacent the ball stud at the first axial end of the joint housing.

In Flumerfelt, the seat member 22 that is located between the ball head and the joint housing adjacent the ball stud at the first axial end of the joint housing is prevented from movement relative to the housing by shoulder 15. (Flumerfelt, Col. 2, lines 10-13). Seat member 23 of Flumerfelt is urged away from the ball stud and into wedging engagement between the interior of the housing 10 and the ball portion 25. (Flumerfelt, Col. 2, lines 20-25).

Morin fails to include structure for urging a portion of the bearing shell in response to wear. Additionally, Morin fails to include a portion of bearing 14 that is urged toward the ball stud 23 and wedged into a gap that is formed between the ball head and the joint housing adjacent the ball stud at the first axial end of the joint housing.

Dresselhouse fails to include a gap that is formed between the ball head and the joint housing adjacent the ball stud at the first axial end of the joint housing. In

Dresselhouse, the socket 20 terminates near a center of the ball head and thus, no gap is formed adjacent the ball stud at the first axial end of the joint housing.

Herbenar discloses a rigid bearing ring 28 that is seated against shoulder 19 in the bore portion 18 of the stem member 11 of pivot joint 10. (Herbenar, Col. 3, lines 27-31). The rigid bearing member 28 of Herbenar does not move relative to the stem member 11.

Since none of Flumerfelt, Morin, Dresselhouse, and Herbenar teaches or suggests each feature of claim 17, claim 17 is allowable over the references. Claims 18-28 depend from claim 17 and are allowable for at least the same reasons as claim 17. Additionally, claims 18-28 are allowable for the limitations recited in each claim.

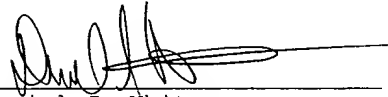
Specifically, claim 18 recites that the structure advances the portion of the bearing shell toward the first axial end of the joint housing for wedging the portion of the bearing shell further into the gap as wear to the portion occurs. None of Flumerfelt, Morin, Dresselhouse, and Herbenar teaches and suggests this feature of claim 18.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that the above-identified patent application is in condition for allowance, and allowance of the above-identified patent application is respectfully requested.

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the fees for this amendment to our Deposit Account
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Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Dan J. Whitman', is written over a horizontal line.

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